deformation zones. However, the burden is on the Examiner to show that *Trokhan et al.* does have a uniform basis weight and porosity in the deformation zones. In view of the difference in manufacturing processes, Applicants submit that the Examiner cannot simply assume that the product of *Trokhan et al.* anticipates claims 18-24. Specifically, *Trokhan et al.* uses a flexible pressing sheet 30 or blanket, which in use is pressed by compressed air from a flat state into the depressions of a 3-D forming belt, which forces an already laid down web of paper fibers to adapt to the form of the belt. The web is then dewatered further, and will thus keep its form. After the pressing is complete, the flexible pressing sheet is lifted from the paper web and 3-D forming belt and returns to its original flat state. The fibers in the web which are evenly spread at the initial dewatering must be rearranged to fit the convolutions of the 3-D belt under pressing. Such rearrangement will cause the density of the paper web to vary, especially on a micro-scale throughout the convolutions.

Trokhan et al. acknowledges that some rearrangements of the fibers in the web 10 will occur during deflection. See column 10, lines 40-42. Although *Trokhan et al.* does indicate that such rearrangement may be completely eliminated, *Trokhan et al.* states that this is merely a possibility, and that it does not necessarily happen. Furthermore, even if there were no such rearrangement of the fibers, *Trokhan et al.* still does not address the issue of uniform porosity. It is important to note that *Trokhan et al.* compares the basis weight of the Trokhan process to that of a prior art process and indicates that as a result of the Trokhan process there is a more uniformed basis weight distribution. However, *Trokhan et al.* does not state that there is a uniform basis weight distribution, merely that it is more uniform than with the prior art process.

In contrast to *Trokhan et al.,* the present invention teaches a fabric which has a uniform level of density and porosity. The specification teaches how such uniform level of density and porosity is achieved. And, the achieved process is clearly different than that taught or suggested by *Trokhan et al.*

Accordingly, Applicants submit that in view of the differences between Trokhan process and that of the present invention, the Examiner has failed to prove or show that *Trokhan et al.* teaches each and every element of claim 18. Specifically, the fiber web of claims 18-24 is made by laying down the fibers directly on a patterned fabric, to create its deformation from the start. No extra stretching takes place, just dewatering through the fabric, resulting in a uniform basis weight and porosity. Accordingly, in view of the foregoing, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claims 18-24 based on *Trokhan et al.*

Claims 15-17:

Claims 15-17 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being obvious over *Trokhan et al.* in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,217,576, hereinafter *Van Phan*.

The Examiner alleges that *Trokhan et al.* discloses each of the elements of claim 15 except for at least one polymer material with a softening temperature. However, the current rejection of claims 15-17 is confusing. For example, the Examiner initially appears to be taking the position that the claimed fabric corresponds to the sheet 30 of *Trokhan et al.* Note the references to elements 31 and 32 in Figure 4. However, the Examiner then shifts to discussing the fluid-permeability of the belt 20. Note the reference to column 5, lines 49-52. Accordingly, it is not clear which element in *Trokhan et al.* is alleged to correspond to

the claimed fabric. If the Examiner alleges that the sheet 30 corresponds to the claimed fabric, Applicants submit that the sheet 30 has no permanent deformation, as required by claim 15. The sheet 30 in Figure 4 of *Trokhan et al.* is described in many places as being elastic, and there is no mention that it is permanently deformed. It is plainly stated in column 11, lines 36-37, that the undeflected portions of the sheet 30 are essentially planar. And deformation present in the sheet is a result of it being forced against the framework 23 by a pressure P. Once the pressure is released, the sheet will undoubtedly be brought back to its essentially planar state as a result of its elasticity.

If the Examiner alleges that the belt 20 corresponds to the claimed fabric, Applicants submit that the portion of the belt 20 between the deflection conduits 24 is not fluid permeable. Note Figure 4, which illustrates the solid web facing surface 23a between the conduits 24. Accordingly, the belt 20 clearly does not teach or suggest a fabric structure in which fluid permeability is essentially equal in fabric zones outside the deformation zones.

Furthermore, with regard to the combination *Trokhan et al.* and *Van Phan*, the Examiner alleges that it is "old and well known in the analogous art" to have at least one polymer material with a softening temperature. However, there is no teaching or suggestion that either of the belt 20 or the sheet 30 in *Trokhan et al.* be substituted with the materials of *Van Phan*. The Examiner's combination is based purely on hindsight without any adequate teaching or suggestion in the prior art.

Accordingly, the Examiner respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claims 15-17.

In the event that there are any questions concerning this response, or the application in general, the Examiner is respectfully urged to telephone the undersigned attorney so that prosecution of the application may be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: September 27, 2004

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